

Questions and Answers About Poll Watchers

T.C.A. § 2.7.104

WHO MAY APPOINT POLL WATCHERS?

- Each political party.
- Each candidate in a general or primary election.
- Any citizen's organization interested in a question on the ballot.
- Any citizen's organization interested in preserving the purity of elections and in guarding against abuse of the elective franchise.

HOW MANY POLL WATCHERS MAY BE APPOINTED?

- Each Political party may appoint two (2) workers.
- Each candidate may appoint one (1) or more workers. Although multiple poll watchers may be appointed, only one (1) of the poll watchers may be in a polling place at any given time.
- Each citizen's organization may appoint two (2) workers

HOW DO POLL WATCHERS GET APPOINTED?

- Appointments must be submitted to the county election commission and appointments must be written and signed by the person or organization authorized to make that appointment.
- Appointments may designate the same person to serve in more than one polling location

TO WHAT LOCATIONS MAY POLL WATCHERS BE APPOINTED?

Early Voting

- County election commission office; and/or
- Satellite location(s)
- Nursing home(s)
- Penal institution(s)

Election Day

- Polling site
- Absentee counting board

WHEN MUST APPOINTMENTS BE MADE?

Early Voting

- No later than 12:00 noon two (2) business days before the first day of early voting; or
- No later than 12:00 noon two (2) business days before the poll watcher will be present at the early voting site.

Election Day

Appointments must be submitted no later than 12:00 noon two (2) business days before the election.

WHO MAY NOT BE APPOINTED AS A POLL WATCHER?

- Anyone who will be or who is a candidate for an office on the ballot.
- A county election commission member.

WHAT DO POLL WATCHERS DO UPON ARRIVING AT THE POLLS?

- Upon arrival at the polling place, a watcher shall display his appointment to the Officer of Elections.
- The poll watcher shall sign the register of poll watchers.
- The poll watcher shall wear a badge displaying their “name” and the words “POLL WATCHER”. The County Election Commission will provide the badges (labels) for candidates or campaign committee’s to use so the precinct officials know they have been duly appointed.

WHAT MAY POLL WATCHERS DO?

- Watch and inspect performance in and around polling place.
- Speak to the judges and the officer of elections.
- Through judges they may challenge voters.
- During preparation and certification, inspect the poll lists.
- They may inspect the ballots while being called and counted.
- During preparation and certification they may inspect the tally sheets.
- They may present a protest of any aspect of the conduct of the election to the “Officer of Elections”, County Election Commission/Commissioner or Inspector.

WHAT POLL WATCHERS MAY NOT DO?

- Interfere with any voter in preparing or casting voter’s ballot.
- Prevent the election official from performing his or her duties.
- Inspect signature lists during the election hours.
- Observe the giving assistance to a voter.
- Wear campaign material of any kind during the performance of his or her duties.
- Exit the room of the counting board after the actual counting of ballots begins.
- Possess electronic devices when they are observing the duties of the absentee counting board.
- Speak to the voters. This includes greeting the voter or standing in the doorway where the voter enters.

MAY POLL WATCHERS ENGAGE IN CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES?

- In the polling place – ABSOUTELY NO
Outside the 100’ boundary, Yes! He or she may engage in campaign activity outside the campaign free zone, however, once the poll watcher resumes his or her duties as a poll watcher inside, he or she must cease the campaign activity.